

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PANAMA 02461 112355Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-01 H-01 SP-02 INR-05 SAB-01
SSO-00 INRE-00 SS-14 IO-06 PM-03 /044 W
-----089686 120003Z /65
O 112330Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6510

S E C R E T PANAMA 2461

STADIS//////////

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS
TAGS: PN, PBOR, PINT
SUBJECT: WHAT PANAMA NEEDS ON DECONCINI

REF: PANAMA 2114

1. A GLOOMY MOOD PERVADES PANAMA AS ITS PEOPLE LISTEN DAILY TO THE BARBED AND PONDEROUS ORATORY OF TREATY OPPONENTS. THE PICTURE DESCRIBED IN REFTEL HAS COME MORE SHARPLY INTO FOCUS BUT HAS CHANGED LITTLE. PUBLIC OPINION--AT LEAST ARTICULATE OPINION--HAS SPOKEN: DECONCINI MAKES THE TREATIES UNACCEPTABLE TO MOST PANAMANIAN. THE GOVERNMENT IS STILL TRYING TO KEEP ITS DWINDLING OPTIONS OPEN, THOUGH ITS POLICY OF ABSOLUTE SILENCE HAS BEEN BROKEN BY THE UN NOTE VERBALE, REPORTS OF LETTERS TO HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS, THE ROWEN INTERVIEW, ETC.

2. A FEW PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE TALKING PRIVATELY ABOUT ACCEPTING DECONCINI EVEN IF IT IS NOT SOFTENED. OTHERS BELIEVE THE TREATIES SHOULD BE KILLED UNLESS IT IS RESCINDED. WE BELIEVE THAT TORRIJOS HAS NOT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PANAMA 02461 112355Z

YET ACCEPTED EITHER OF THESE VIEWS. HE BADLY WANTS THE TREATIES. HIS ACQUIESCENCE IN THE UNPLEASANT MEDICINE HE HAS ALREADY HAD TO TAKE, INCLUDING AMENDED ARTICLE IV OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, SHOWS THAT. BUT PUBLIC REACTION HERE HAS ONLY ACCENTUATED WHAT WAS PROBABLY ALWAYS TRUE--HE CANNOT SWALLOW UNADULTERATED DECONCINI WITHOUT A DISASTEROUS LOSS OF FACE. HE IS, IN OUR OPINION,

STILL HOPING FOR SOME ACCEPTABLE THIRD WAY OUT.
IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH ROWEN WE READ A PLEA FOR SOMEONE
TO SHOW HIM A PATH BETWEEN REJECTING A TREATY HE DESPERATELY
WANTS AND ACCEPTING SOMETHING HUMILIATING THAT
MIGHT EVEN COST HIM HIS JOB.

3. ANOTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION: WHAT IF, DESPITE ALL,
HE DOES TRY TO SWALLOW IT? THIS COULD LEAD TO HIS DOWNFALL
AND THE TREATIES' REPUDIATION BY HIS SUCCESSOR. EVEN IF HE
SHOULD MANAGE TO HANG ON, THE WELL WOULD BE POISONED.
HE WOULD PROBABLY BE FORCED TO START PUSHING FOR RENEGOTIATION
OR REPUDIATION OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY ALMOST AT ONCE.
IN ANY EVENT, THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION NECESSARY IF THE CANAL
TREATY ITSELF IS TO WORK WOULD BE SEVERELY DAMAGED AT ITS
DELICATE OUTSET. WE NEED NOT COMMENT HERE ON THE IMPACT
THIS RETREAT FROM NON-INTERVENTION WOULD HAVE ON OUR
RELATIONS IN THE REST OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE
WORLD.

4. IN REFTTEL, WE CONCLUDED THAT: "EVEN IF THERE ARE
NO NEW HORRORS IN THE SECOND TREATY, OUR GUESS IS THAT--
UNLESS DECONCINI IS SOMEHOW ATTENUATED--TORRIJOS PROBABLY
WILL NOT RPT NOT ACCEPT IT. HOW TO ACHIEVE THAT
ATTENUATION IS THE PROBLEM." WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE
THIS CONCLUSION WELL-FOUNDED; IF OUR INTEREST IN
HAVING A TREATY IS TO BE FULFILLED, WE MUST CREATE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 PANAMA 02461 112355Z

THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO ENABLE TO PANAMANIAN TO SIGN
IT. THIS MESSAGE EXAMINES WHAT THOSE CONDITIONS MIGHT
BE.

5. THE IDEAL WOULD BE TO GET DECONCINI EXPUNGED FROM THE
BOOKS. EVEN AN ATTENUATED VERSION IS GOING TO BE
TROUBLESOME TO US, AND WILL CONVEY NO CORRESPONDING BENEFITS
IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND BEYOND. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE
TREATIES ARE DEAD AT THIS END UNLESS IT IS DROPPED.
BUT EVEN ACKNOWLEDGING THIS POSSIBILITY, WE ARE ACTING
ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE
NOW TO GET DECONCINI CLEANLY REMOVED. THEREFORE, WE
MOVE TO THE SITUATION WITH THE NEXT BEST PROBABILITY
OF SUCCESS.

6. THIS WOULD BE A SENATE RESERVATION, COEQUAL WITH
DECONCINI, MAKING IT CLEAR THAT THE DECONCINI RESERVATION
DOES NOT AUTHORIZE WHAT ITS AUTHOR SAYS IT DOES.
(I.E., "SINCE THE MAIN THRUST OF THIS AMENDMENT IS
DIRECTED TOWARD SITUATIONS IN WHICH THE CANAL IS CLOSED
BECAUSE OF INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES IN PANAMA--DIFFICULTIES
LIKE A GENERAL STRIKE, A POLITICAL UPRISING OR

OTHER SIMILAR EVENTS, THE CONSENT OF THE PANAMANIAN TO
TAKE ACTION WOULD NOT MAKE SENSE." RECORD, P.S.
3818.) OBVIOUSLY ANY EFFORT TO NEUTRALIZE THE DECONCINI
RESERVATION IN THIS MANNER WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE IN SUCH
A WAY AS TO SAVE FACE FOR SENATOR DECONCINI, AS
WELL AS SAYING ENOUGH FOR TORRIJOS TO PERMIT HIM
TO TAKE IT. LESS DESIRABLE BUT ALSO POSSIBLY CAPABLE
OF CREATING THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS WOULD BE AN
UNDERSTANDING OR A SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION TO
THE SAME EFFECT. THE EFFICACY OF SUCH SENATE ACTION WILL
DEPEND ON THE WORDING, REGARDLESS OF THE FORM
CHOSEN. THE CLEARER THE CONSTRAINT UPON OR DIMINISHMENT
OF DECONCINI, THE MORE LIKELY THAT TORRIJOS WILL BE ABLE
TO ACCEPT THE TREATY. SUBTLE LOGICAL ARGUMENT IS LOST
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 PANAMA 02461 112355Z

IN A SITUATION SUCH AS THIS ONE. THE ISSUE IN PANAMA IS
ONE OF MASS POLITICS, NOT SCHOLARLY DELIBERATION BY LAWYERS
OR STATESMEN. WHATEVER THE SENATE MAY DO MUST BE COMPRE-
HENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF THIS POLITICAL REALITY.

7. ACTION BY THE PRESIDENT ALONE WITHOUT SOMETHING
FROM THE SENATE IS MUCH LESS LIKELY TO CREATE THE
MINIMUM CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR ACCEPTANCE HERE IN
PANAMA. HOWEVER, IF THE SENATE IS UNABLE TO COME UP
WITH SOMETHING, THE ADMINISTRATION MUST DO AS MUCH AS
IT CAN -- RECOGNIZING THAT IT MIGHT WELL FAIL. IT ALMOST
SURELY WILL FAIL UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO PRODUCE SOMETHING
THAT PANAMANIAN SPOKESMEN CAN CREDIBLY CLAIM TO HAVE A
LEGAL WEIGHT EQUAL TO THAT OF DECONCINI. THIS MIGHT
BE A STATEMENT IN A PROTOCOL OF EXCHANGE OF
RATIFICATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE. WHAT CAN BE DONE ALONG
THESE LINES WITHOUT SENATE APPROVAL IS A QUESTION BEYOND
OUR COMPETENCE. BUT REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE PANAMANIAN
MAY SAY IN THEIR DESPERATION TO FIND A WAY TO GET THE
TREATIES, WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT
CARTER--OR ANYONE ELSE--THAT ARE NOT NOT LEGALLY BINDING
WILL CREATE CONDITIONS HERE IN WHICH THE TREATIES HAVE
A CHANCE FOR LIFE.
JORDEN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TREATY RATIFICATION, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, NEUTRALISM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PANAMA02461
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780156-0529
Format: TEL
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780470/aaaachmy.tel
Line Count: 160
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f499f0b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Reference: 78 PANAMA 2114
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3009509
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHAT PANAMA NEEDS ON DECONCINI
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, PN, (DECONCINI, DENNIS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f499f0b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014